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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

S/WF

February 20, 1974

TO: The Secretary

FROM: S/WF - Ambassador Edwin M. Martin

First Meeting of Preparatory Committee for  
World Food Conference, New York - February 11-15

Some 60 countries were represented at this first session including all major countries except Communist China. Most delegations were headed by officials from their New York UN Delegations, but a number were from capitals (UK, France, Germany, Yugoslavia, Poland, Colombia) or normally covered FAO activities in Rome (Canada, Brazil, Pakistan). USSR delegation chief was Mr. Makeyev, Number 2 in UN Delegation, who went out of his way to establish good personal relations with US delegation. Under Secretary of UN for Economic and Social Affairs de Seyne informed me that Chinese unusually inactive in UN economic meetings at present time.

US preference as Chairman, Swedish Ambassador to UN Rydbeck, was elected for First Meeting only, but at close was confirmed for two subsequent sessions for which US had pressed. He did an excellent job.

Secretary General Marei performed well and was warmly welcomed by all participants.

Meeting was largely confined to preliminary staking out of positions and protection of options in course of debate on agenda and on work program of Secretariat in preparation for next meeting in Geneva June 4. This discussion was pleasantly open with little evidence of bloc solidarity although 77 were meeting regularly and non-aligned from time to time. Western powers didn't always agree and several US statements were endorsed by a wide range of developing countries.

The USSR requested postponement of final action on the agenda until PrepCom II on grounds that it was based

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on FAO debate in which it had not participated and had received text only ten days in advance. US supported as courtesy and because delay would provide more time for other governments to consider amendments to agenda proposed by U.S.

Only light on Soviet substantive approach came from statements by them or Eastern Europeans emphasizing that stockpiling policies were entirely for national decision and reserving position on provision of data to "Early Warning" system on food shortages. This represents somewhat negative but hardly unexpected attitude on two points on which cooperation by Soviets is important to better handling of world food problem.

It would appear now that trade in foods is the issue on which the U.S. may have the most trouble though our position is to some extent a middle ground between the EC and the 77 and though the 77 have few directly relevant interests to press.

I had an opportunity to refer to the points you made in your opening statement to the Energy Conference with respect to the impacts of the oil crisis on LDCs and especially the threat presented by the fertilizer shortage. U.S. interest in latter problem was warmly welcomed by several major LDCs.

Drafted: S/WF:Ambassador Martin  
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